

**Sermon Notes: July 30, 2023**  
**Focus:** Parables of the Kingdom

[Lectionary Readings](#)

The gospel today is a list of "Parables of the Kingdom." Jesus uses analogies to explain the nature and characteristics of the Kingdom of God.

*The Mustard Seed*

Matthew 13:31-32

Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed, which starts as one of the smallest seeds but grows like Audrey II in Little Shop of Horrors. (I enjoy torturing my kids with the line "Feed me Seymour.") The scholarly consensus sees this parable as illustrating the seemingly insignificant beginnings of the Kingdom, but its ultimate growth and impact on the world. From humble beginnings, the Kingdom grows and encompasses the whole world. It highlights the inclusive nature of the Kingdom of God. Just as the mustard seed expands past our control, the Kingdom is portrayed as accommodating and embracing people from diverse backgrounds and walks of life.



*The Yeast*

Matthew 13:33

Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to yeast that a woman mixes into a large amount of flour to make bread. The yeast permeates the entire batch and causes it to rise. This parable portrays the pervasive and transformative influence of the Kingdom. Like yeast, the Kingdom unstoppably affects and transforms individuals and society. Yeast is often used negatively, but not in this case.

**Yeast and Mustard**  
*(Empowerment)*

The parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast are empowering images; they highlight starting small. They can encourage the marginalized or disadvantaged by showing that even the smallest efforts can lead to significant positive change.

*The Hidden Treasure*

Matthew 13:44

This parable tells the story of a person who discovers a hidden treasure in a field and sells all he has to buy that field and possess the treasure. It's about the priceless value of the Kingdom of God. If we saw God's world as worth our sacrifice, we would be willing to pursue it with everything we had.

*The Pearl of Great Price*

Matthew 13:45-46

A merchant searches for fine pearls and finds one of great value. Like the Hidden Treasure, this parable emphasizes the supreme value of the Kingdom of God. The merchant's willingness to give up everything to possess the pearl shows the value of the Kingdom above all other pursuits.

**Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Price** (Value of all individuals)  
Both underscore the value of everyone in the eyes of God. We all have inherent worth regardless of class, race, or background.

### *The Net*

Matthew 13:47-50

In this parable, the Kingdom of God is compared to a large net cast into the sea, gathering fish of all kinds. The net gathering fish of all kinds underscores the idea that the Kingdom does not discriminate, offering hope and salvation to all. The end is harsh when the fish are sorted into good and bad ones. There is a final judgment that awaits all people. But the net represents the preaching of the gospel thereby gathering people from all walks of life. Who knows how long we have? I say “walk” with your fellow fish and let God worry about the end of days.

### **The Net**

(A little more Justice and Judgment)

More than eventual sorting and judgment of the fish. This can be seen as a call for accountability and justice, both in society and within the religious community, especially concerning how the powerful treat the vulnerable.

### *The Scribe like a Householder*

Matthew 13:51-52

A householder brings out both new and old treasures from the storeroom. Scholars generally interpret this parable as emphasizing the continuity between the Old and New Testaments. The scribe, being trained in the law, can understand, and appreciate the teachings of Jesus, which builds upon the foundation of the Old Testament. God's concern for justice is throughout the biblical narrative. We would do well to remember the call to justice shows up all the time and especially in the Old Testament prophets, history, and law of the Old Testament.

### **Overall**

We can piece these puzzle pieces together to get a good picture of how to walk more closely with God.

*Mustardy beginnings*

*Start your day not expecting respect but giving it.*

*Yeasty influence*

*Ask God for the vision to see good things growing in unexpected places.*

*Pearly Treasure*

*See God making everything. Nothing in God's economy is worthless except when we devalue others.*

*The Net of Justice*

*Understand God's equity and kindness and treat each other the same.*

*Scripture throughline*

*Balance it all. The way of God is true in the Old & New Testament & today.*

I think the Old Testament prophet Micah would have grooved on Jesus' teachings today. Centuries before he wrote, “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

**Todd**